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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BRIDGETOWN 000199

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR CA/FPP, INL/HSTC; DEPT ALSO
PASS TO KCC; POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION
MANAGERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [BB](#)
SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - BRIDGETOWN

REF: 05 STATE 205073

a. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Embassy Bridgetown's consular district covers seventeen islands - seven independent countries, three British islands, four French islands and, for visa purposes, three Dutch islands. The islands have widely varying levels of development that affect the level of fraud. Barbados, with a strong economy based on tourism and financial services, has the lowest refusal rate and the lowest levels of fraud. Refusal rates and levels of fraud are higher on other islands in the Eastern Caribbean, such as St. Lucia and Dominica, where the economies are less developed and unemployment is high.

In the last few months, St. Vincent, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Dominica have started issuing machine-readable passports with digitized photos. These passports are a significant improvement over the previous, non-machine readable versions with hand-written bio-data. In our consular district, only St. Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda continue to issue non-machine readable passports with handwritten bio-data pages. Barbados and Grenada have both issued machine-readable passports since 2004 and 2001, respectively.

b. NIV FRAUD: Post has not detected significant fraud in any particular NIV category. Most of the fraud encountered is the use of fake or padded job letters, bank statements, and other supporting documents by applicants for B1/B2 visas. One area of concern is applicants from St. Lucia. We have detected a disturbing increase of fraudulent documents from applicants from St. Lucia, including one verified case of an applicant with a fake backdated St. Lucian entry stamp. There have also been reports of Guyanese nationals receiving fraudulent St. Lucian passports in order to travel visa-free to Canada.

Another area of concern is the large number of third country nationals on the islands in our district, particularly Guyanese and Jamaicans in the British Virgin Islands, Dominicans in Dutch St. Maarten, and Haitians on the French islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Martin. These applicants have a higher refusal rate than our other applicants and, not surprisingly, are more prone to use fake documents when they apply. Although many of these applicants are bona fide long-term residents of these islands, we have detected some fraudulent documents used by these third country nationals to exaggerate the length of their legal residence on these islands.

At least two of the island states - St. Kitts and

Nevis and Dominica - also have economic citizenship programs that allow third country nationals to buy local citizenship. While not specifically fraudulent, these programs have raised concerns because the majority of those who take advantage of these programs are from countries of concern including the former Soviet Union and countries in the Middle East and East Asia.

c. IV FRAUD: Post has detected very few cases of IV fraud. A small percentage of IV applicants are employment-based, and nearly all of them are nurses who are well qualified. The vast majority of IV applicants are family-based, and most of those cases are straightforward. The most problematic cases that we have encountered are spouses of U.S. citizens who have overstayed their visas or entered without inspection. While most of these IR1 applicants admit to their illegal entry and overstay, some have used fraudulent means to conceal an overstay. In one case, a St. Lucian applicant attempted to conceal her 3-year stay in the USVI with a fraudulent, backdated St. Lucian entry stamp. At the interview, her story unraveled and she admitted to mailing her passport back to St. Lucia and paying someone to get a backdated entry stamp. We have expressed our concern to the government of St. Lucia about the backdated entry stamps and the prevalence of fraudulent documents from St. Lucia.

Post accepts relatively few IV petitions, generally in cases when the U.S. citizen petitioner is a resident of our consular district. In one case, an American citizen who lived in Texas attempted to file an IV

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petition for his Cuban wife. The petitioner had recently met his wife on the Internet and they were married in Jamaica just a few days before coming to Barbados. The petitioner's passport showed recent travel to Korea and Russia, and he admitted that he had traveled there to see women whom he had also met on the Internet. The consular officer refused to accept the petition because it was not clearly approvable. Two weeks later, Barbados Immigration arrested the American citizen and his Cuban wife for attempting to leave Barbados with fake U.S. birth certificates and driver's licenses. The U.S. citizen, who used to work at the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, made a fake driver's license and birth certificate for himself to match his wife's. Although Barbados Immigration eventually released the U.S. citizen, Post entered a lookout and notified DHS about his fraudulent activities.

d. DV FRAUD: Post processed fewer than 10 DV cases in 2005 and encountered no fraud.

e. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD: The vast majority of our passport applicants are children born in the U.S. to non-U.S. citizen mothers with tourist visas. Post experienced a significant increase in passport applications in 2005, largely because consular officers and consular agents made regular visits to other islands to accept passport applications. These consular visits have made it easier for American citizens on other islands to apply for passports, since they do not have to make an expensive trip to Barbados to appear before a consular officer. The increase in passport applications from consular visits raised some concerns in CA/FPP about the possibility of non-U.S. citizens fraudulently applying for U.S. passports. Post temporarily suspended the consular visits while consulting with CA/FPP on fraud-prevention measures. Post recently resumed the visits and incorporated a number of CA/FPP suggestions,

including requiring applicants to make an appointment in advance and no longer using consular agents (who can accept but not approve applications) for consular visits to other islands.

Post has detected a few cases of applicants making a false claim to U.S. citizenship. In one case, a young Guyanese applicant claimed to be a U.S. citizen who lost his passport. His story fell apart when he could not remember the name of the school he attended in New York and said that he "sat for the SAT exam". Post contacted Barbados immigration, which confirmed that he was living illegally in Barbados and deported him.

f. ADOPTION FRAUD: Post only processes about 15-20 adoption cases a year, although these cases are sometimes problematic because the U.S. citizen petitioner adopts a relative and the adopted child does not meet the definition of orphan. For example, one adoption case was refused when it was discovered that the 14-year-old "orphan" was actually living with her biological mother in Grenada. Most of these adoptions take place not in Barbados but on other islands in our district, making it very difficult for consular officers to conduct a field investigation. To classify a child as an orphan in these cases, we rely on documentation from a competent authority in the country where the adoption takes place. This documentation usually consists of a letter from a court, welfare officer, or social worker that the biological parent is not capable of providing proper care and has irrevocably released the child for adoption and emigration.

g. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD: Post has not processed any asylum cases. In 2005, Post issued 72 boarding letters to LPRs with lost, stolen, or expired green cards. In these cases, we routinely verify with DHS that the applicant is an LPR. We detected one case involving an Antiguan man with a fake expired green card who applied for a boarding letter. After DHS verified that the A number on his green card belonged to a Brazilian woman, we denied the boarding letter and entered a P6C hit on the applicant.

h. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: With a consular district spanning many islands, Post is hard-pressed to maintain close contacts with host

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government authorities. Our closest contacts are with Barbadian authorities, which generally take fraud matters seriously and have cooperated with the Embassy on a number of cases. They have also expressed interest in receiving specific USG training to detect fraudulent documentation because of the increasing numbers of eastern Europeans and others they perceive using Barbados as a launching point for entry into the U.S. and Canada. Government authorities on the other, less-prosperous islands have limited resources for fighting fraud and illegal migration. For example, cash-strapped Dominica allows Haitians to enter Dominica by paying a \$400 bond that can be refunded when they exit the country legally. Dominican authorities acknowledge that the vast majority of Haitians never collect their bond because they leave Dominica by boat to illegally enter the nearby French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Of the more than 11,000 Haitians who have entered Dominica since the program started in 2003, only about 100 have collected their bond.

i. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: Given the proximity of Caribbean islands to the U.S. and lax immigration controls on some of the islands, it is not surprising to hear reports of alien smugglers and economic

migrants using the islands as transit points to the U.S. Post has encountered a few cases that lend credence to these reports. In the summer of 2005, two applicants from Ghana applied for transit visas, claiming they needed to transit Miami to travel to Belize for work. They had traveled from Ghana to Moscow to Jamaica to Barbados, a travel pattern consistent with alien smuggling. More recently, Post received a request for an emergency visa appointment for 10 Mongolians who said they needed to transit the U.S. on their way from Grenada to Mongolia. They claimed to represent the Mongolia-Grenada Cooperation Society, although the two countries seem to have no diplomatic or economic relations and no reason to have a cooperation society. Post granted their request for an early appointment (partly to investigate possible fraud), but the Mongolians could not come for the interview because Barbados immigration denied their entry to Barbados.

We consistently hear reports throughout the region of alien smuggling via private boats. Most are attempting to reach the USVI. One American citizen was arrested last year when a French naval vessel discovered illegal drugs and 7 aliens from St. Vincent on his boat near Guadeloupe. Just last week, a sailboat with approximately 10 Cubans onboard was discovered in St. Martin.

j. STAFFING AND TRAINING: The section does not have a formal FPU. Because of staffing shortages, the FPU Chief position is temporarily filled by IV Chief Scott Urbom. When the section is fully staffed, the FPU Chief typically devotes 50% of his time to NIV interviews. Post does not have any LES devoted to the FPU but occasionally uses NIV FSNs to call to verify documents. We are working to develop a more effective FPU and considering hiring an LES fraud investigator. We have also requested funds to conduct an initial validation study.

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